

Hello Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee. Our names are Rosie and Bob Shea and we are the parents of Jeremiah Shea, a client of Journey Found, a non-profit funded by DDS, that runs our son's residential program. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the state budget.

First, we thank the legislature for the wage increase for people who work directly with our son, Jeremiah who has BIG autism and needs 24-hour care. Jeremiah is the cutest human in the world, but can also be extremely challenging. The people who care for him and others like Jer, deserve even higher wages which is often reflected in staff turnover and job vacancies.

Unfortunately, this increase in wages also does not cover the exploding costs of serving the most vulnerable people of our state – especially during the time of COVID.

We are writing in support of Journey Found and other non-profits who take care of our most vulnerable population. Please increase DDS funding for food, household and office supplies, utilities, gas, training, recreation, home maintenance and the infrastructure necessary to service delivery. The cost of living increase has not been addressed in 14 years and is a huge problem for agencies like Journey Found. To address this lack of appropriate funding, please honor the long-term plan initiated last year to address underfunding of community nonprofits and increase funding this year by an additional \$461 million, or 8% in total for FY23.

Please support two additional proposals by Governor Lamont from the American Rescue Plan Act for DDS:

- \$5 million in FY23 for infrastructure improvements for public and privately-owned camps.
- \$5 million in FY23 to provide additional recreational and leisure opportunities to facilitate socialization and connections as the state emerges from the pandemic.

Thank you for all you do and please address this MOST important funding issue of our state.

Rosie and Bob Shea